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ABSTRACT

This book, one of a series, focuses on help with homework. The message of the series urges parents and children to spend time together, talk about stories, and learn together. The first part of each book presents stories appropriate for varying grade levels, both younger children and those in grades three and four, and each book presents stories on a particular theme. The Read-along Stories in this book are: "Boy with a Shovel" (David L. Harrison); "Rebel Cows: A Victim's Story" (Alex Bagosy); and "The Innkeeper's Boy" (Diane Brooks Pleninger). On an accompanying audiotape, the stories are performed as radio dramas, allowing children to read along. The second half of each book provides ideas and guidelines for parents, as well as activities and books for additional reading. This book suggests six methods of helping students with homework, including: (1) showing interest; (2) providing structure; (3) allowing schedule flexibility while maintaining homework's importance; (4) asking about completed homework; (5) encouraging planned study for tests; and (6) showing children how to organize and write in a notebook. Contains 34 references. (EF)

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Parents and Children Together SERIES

Encouraging Good Homework Habits

ED 452 530

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PLUS

Read-along Stories:

Boy with a Shovel

Rebel Cows: A Victim's Story

The Innkeeper's Boy

CS 217 390

Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Encouraging Good Homework Habits." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.

Parents and Children Together SERIES
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Introduction

Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together***.

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audio tape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this Series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***

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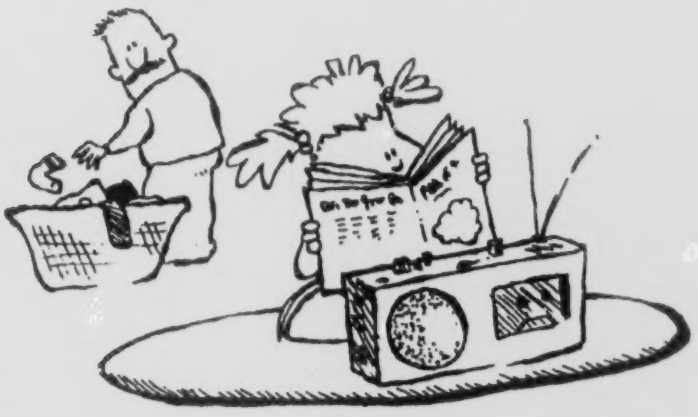
Getting Started

In this book we look at how you can help your children with their homework. On side B of the tape, we have three read-along stories. We encourage you to listen to these stories and to read them with your children, so that they can participate in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can also listen to the stories alone, if you wish.

Before reading the story, talk about the titles or things that might happen in the story, then—after the story is finished—talk about it again. By the way, if in the middle of the story something funny or exciting or interesting happens, it's OK for you to stop the tape and discuss the event, or for you to ask your child questions such as "Would you like to be a vegetarian?" or "What do you suppose it would have been like to live in the Middle Ages?" and then follow it up with a why or why not. These questions make your conversation about the story more natural and valuable.



Read-along Stories

Boy with a Shovel

by David L. Harrison

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

This story mentions many of the animals of the forest that dig holes and burrows and dens. Talk about all of the forest animals you know that like to dig in the earth. Write down on a piece of paper a list of the animals you think of. As you read the story, see if you thought of all the digging animals the author mentions.

Once there was a boy who got a shovel for his birthday. Right away he took it to the woods to dig a hole.

He had not been digging long when he uncovered a mouse hole.

"Rats!" squeaked Mouse. "You've ruined my house!"

"I'm sorry," said the boy. "I was only digging a hole with my new shovel."

"Accidents happen to anyone," said Mouse. "I like to dig holes myself. I'll help you."

With both of them digging, the hole grew deeper. Before long they uncovered a mole's tunnel.

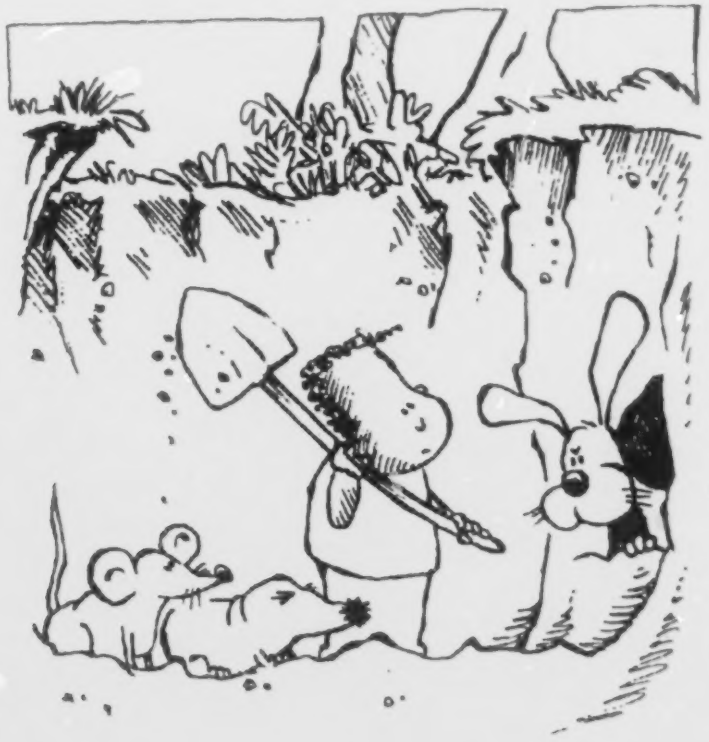
"Oh!" mumbled Mole. "You've ruined my hole!"

"Mouse and I are digging," said the boy. "We're really sorry about your tunnel. Would you like to dig with us?"

"I suppose I could," muttered Mole. "I'm pretty good at digging."

With three of them working, the hole grew even bigger. Before they knew it, they had uncovered a rabbit munching lettuce in his burrow.

"You've knocked dirt on my food! How rude! cried Rabbit.



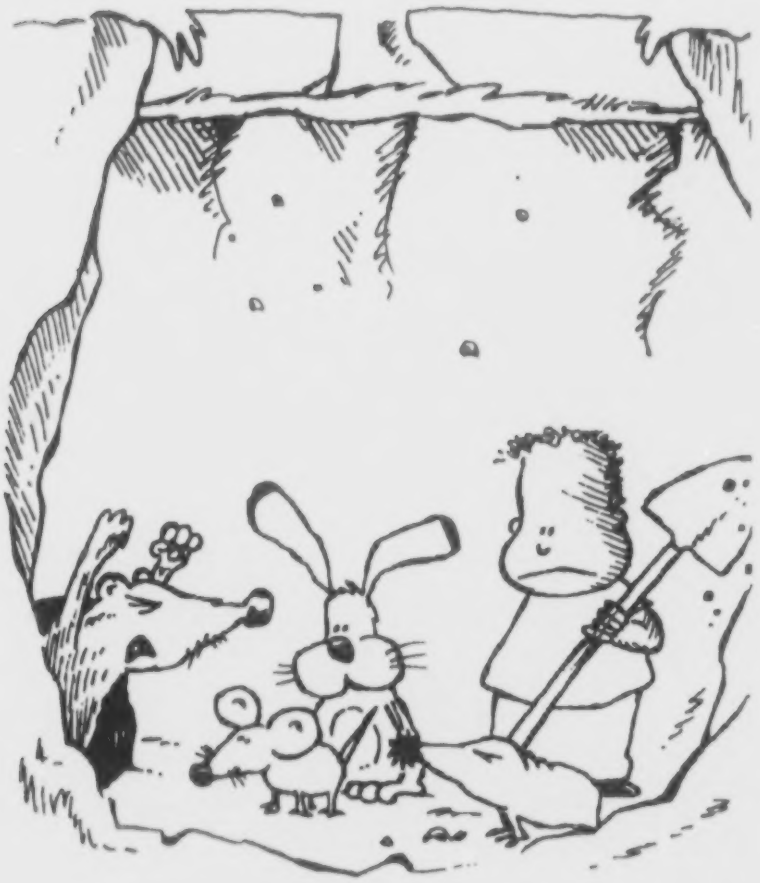
"We didn't mean to," the boy said, "I'm digging a hole with Mouse and Mole."

"That's all right," Rabbit said. "I was nearly finished anyway. I'll help you."

The four dug and dug. The hole grew wider and deeper. Pretty soon they dug into a badger's den and woke him.

"Look out!" snapped Badger. "My den's caved in!"

"We're terribly sorry," said the boy. "I'm digging a hole, and Mouse and Mole and Rabbit are helping me."

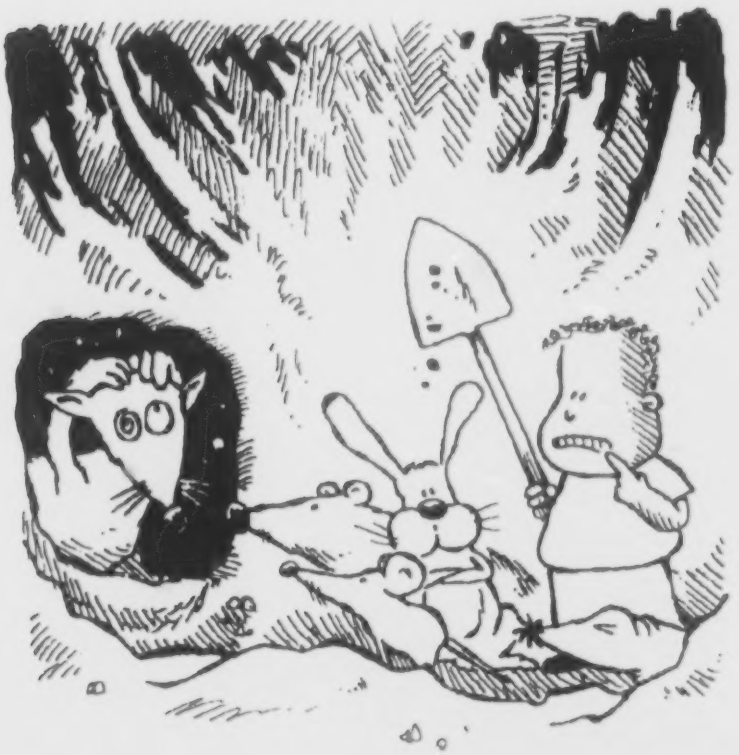


"Then I'll help, too," said Badger. "I don't like to brag, but I can dig a better hole than this using one paw."

With five digging, the hole got still bigger and still wider and still deeper. They dug so wide and deep that they uncovered a fox hiding in his den.

"Help!" Fox yelped. "Now the hounds can find me! You're not hunters, are you?"

"No," the boy said. "We're diggers. See."



"Hmmm," said Fox. "Then I'd better dig with you. If a hound comes around maybe he won't notice me."

The boy and Mouse and Mole and Rabbit and Badger and Fox dug all morning. They dug their hole so wide and deep that they uncovered a bear's den.

"What are you doing up there?" growled Bear.

"Digging a hole," said the boy. "Everyone is helping me. Isn't it a fine hole?

"Not bad," he sniffed. "Not bad. With my help, this could become a hole to be proud of."

And he began to dig.

With the boy and Mouse and Mole and Rabbit and Badger and Fox and Bear working together, they dug the grandest hole anyone in the forest had ever seen.

They dug until they came to a clear stream. The stream poured into the hole and turned it into a pond.

"I can't dig any more now," the boy said. "I have to go home. Thank you for helping me."

"Thank you for the pond," the animals answered. "We needed one." That night the boy's father asked him what he had done all day.

"Nothing much," he said. "Except I dug a hole with my new shovel."

Then he fell asleep.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

The boy and the forest animals made a pond with just a shovel and their paws. Talk about ways that man-made lakes and ponds are made in real life. You can find information on this subject at the local library. Also, talk about other forest animals that behave like "natural engineers" by digging and building homes and other structures.

Rebel Cows: A Victim's Story

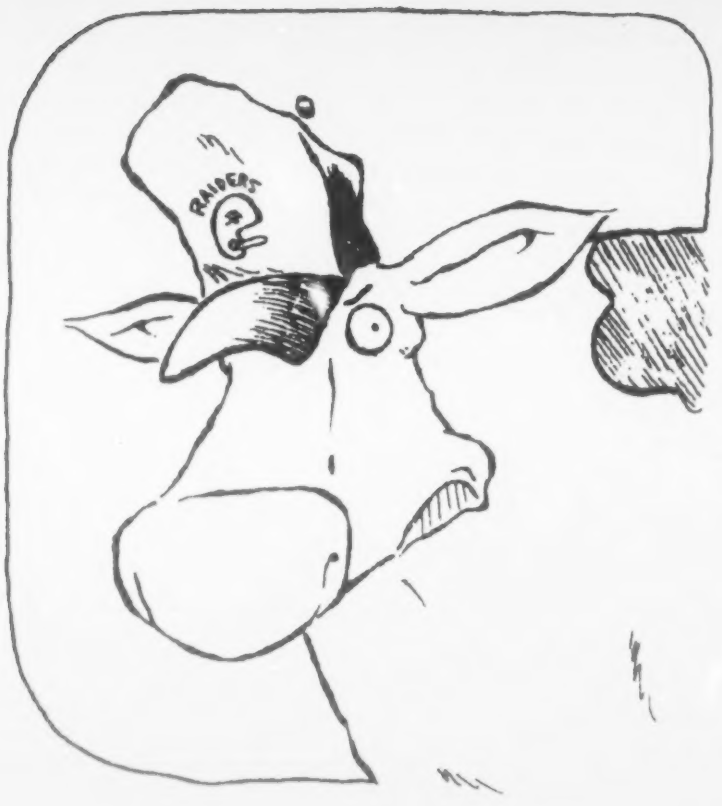
by Alex Bagosy

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

Cows are gentle creatures that are strict vegetarians. This means that they eat only plants, or "vegetation." Talk about animals that eat meat and animals that eat only plants. What are some of the differences between the way meat-eating animals and plant-eating animals act? Why do some people think it is healthy for people and good for the environment to be a vegetarian?

One crisp fall day, while walking down a quiet country road, I heard the sound of footsteps behind me. I had thought I was alone. I walked faster, wondering who could be following me. The speed of the footsteps also increased. A shiver ran down my spine when I remembered that this area was the most common spot for cow attacks. Why had I ventured here alone?

Fighting back panic, I realized that I'd have to turn around and face whatever or whoever was



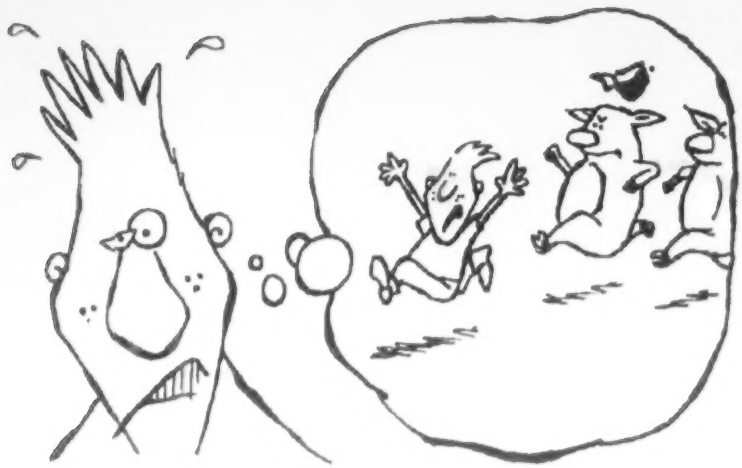
following me. I gasped when I turned and saw a teenage steer, maliciously chewing his cud and insolently staring back at me. I was horrified still more when I noticed a tattoo on his right shin that read "Hell's Holstein." Underneath the words was a picture of a T-bone steak with a skull and lightning bolt across it. The dry leaves on the ground rustled and I looked about me to see that I was surrounded by several cows. These were not your average docile country cows—these were gang cows!

The steer must have been the leader because he wore his Raider's cap tilted to the left.

"Why me? What do you want?" I stammered. They continued to stare malevolently, all together responding with a rebel-like moo. I gulped as I looked frantically around and then down to see—MY GENUINE COWHIDE BOOTS!

I broke through the circle and ran with all my might, vaulting over a fence and scaling a tree. Agitated, they mooed in anger and continued to mill around the fence, all the while taunting me with snorts from their hairy nostrils. Finally, that evening, along about milking time, they sauntered off. I had escaped their beefy, evil clutches.

When the last cow disappeared from view, I climbed down, still shaking. After reporting the incident to the police, I knew I had to get on with my life. But I began to hear voices in the middle of the night, even though I was fully awake. Was it a long low rumble of thunder or was that mooing that I heard? I felt weak in the knees whenever I was confronted with dairy products, and the smell of beef sizzling on the grill made me nauseous.



I couldn't go on that way—what kind of life is it when you're tortured by memories of a cow gang attack? I went into therapy and after much rehabilitation, I was able to sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" without breaking into a cold sweat. I look forward to a future free of the menacing sound of cud chewing—as a vegetarian. But I never go into an orchard after dark, even with a group, and I refuse to weed my garden unless accompanied by at least two other people.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

The cow gang acted angrily toward the boy in the story because he was wearing cowhide boots. Why do you think that was so? A lot of humans also don't like it when people wear clothing or shoes made of leather or fur. Talk about why we should be kind to animals. Think of ways we can protect animals and still keep people fed and clothed.

The Innkeeper's Boy

by Diane Brooks Pleninger

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

This story is set in the Middle Ages, when there were queens and kings. It contains words that you might not know. Get a pencil and paper ready. Jot down the unusual words and look them up later. Or, as you read, try to figure out what they mean from the context of the story.

Rain fell like arrows in the night, hailing down upon the roof of the inn at Clary Crossing until the thatch grew damp and heavy and the roof beams groaned under its weight. The fire sputtered in the chimney, and steaming horses whickered and snuffed in the stalls.

A boy lay wrapped in quilts on a bench by the hearth. It was his job to open the door to midnight travelers. The lazy innkeeper lay abed in an upstairs room, loving his sleep.

At first, the boy thought the faint pounding he heard was his dream. On the fourth knock, he awoke and stumbled to the door. Before him

stood a tall stranger in a black cloak, an old man pale as death.

"I can go no farther," gasped the man and fell into a chair near the fire.

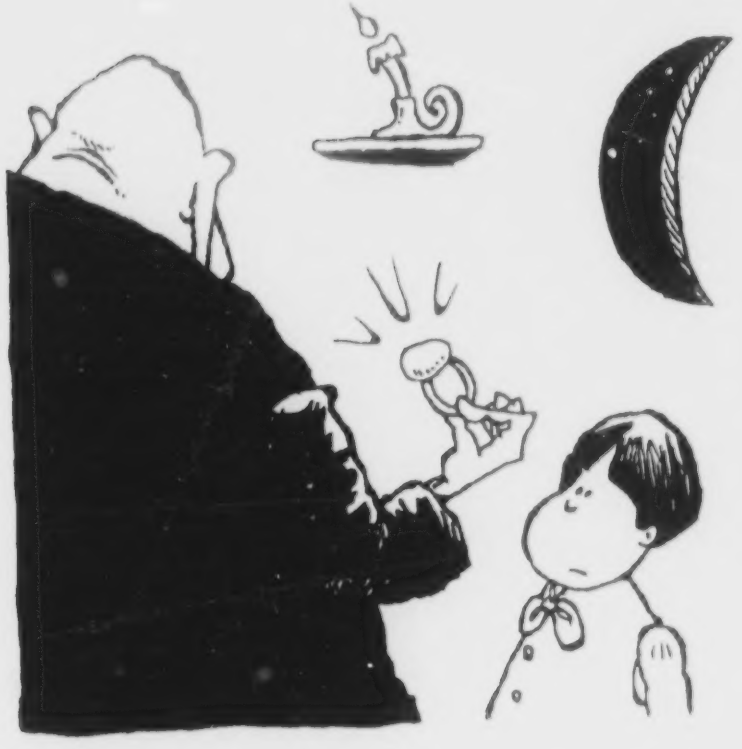
Luc, for that was the boy's name, hastened to stir the embers and pour a beaker of ale. But the man wanted only to talk.

"The king is dead," he said. Luc was silent, but his eyes grew wide.

"His son, Prince Albion of Picardy, is his rightful heir. But the king's brother, Mogor, the cruel Duke of Artois, covets the throne. He will stop at nothing to claim it."

"Will there be war?" Luc asked.

"Except for this," the man answered, and he held up a small, bright object that glimmered even in the dark room. Luc took it in his hand. It was a gold ring, set with an egg-shaped stone that changed color before his eyes, turning from amethyst to emerald to carmine in the firelight.



"Whoever wears this shall claim the throne of Picardy in peace. It is a song stone. Listen to it.

Luc raised it to his ear and, for an instant, thought he heard a faint sound, like a distant flute.

"The king asked me to carry the ring to Prince Albion at Amiens. But Mogor's henchmen have hounded me at every milepost. I am less than a day ahead of them. And I am growing weak."

"Can you not hide from them?" Luc asked excitedly. "I know many good hiding places in these hills!"

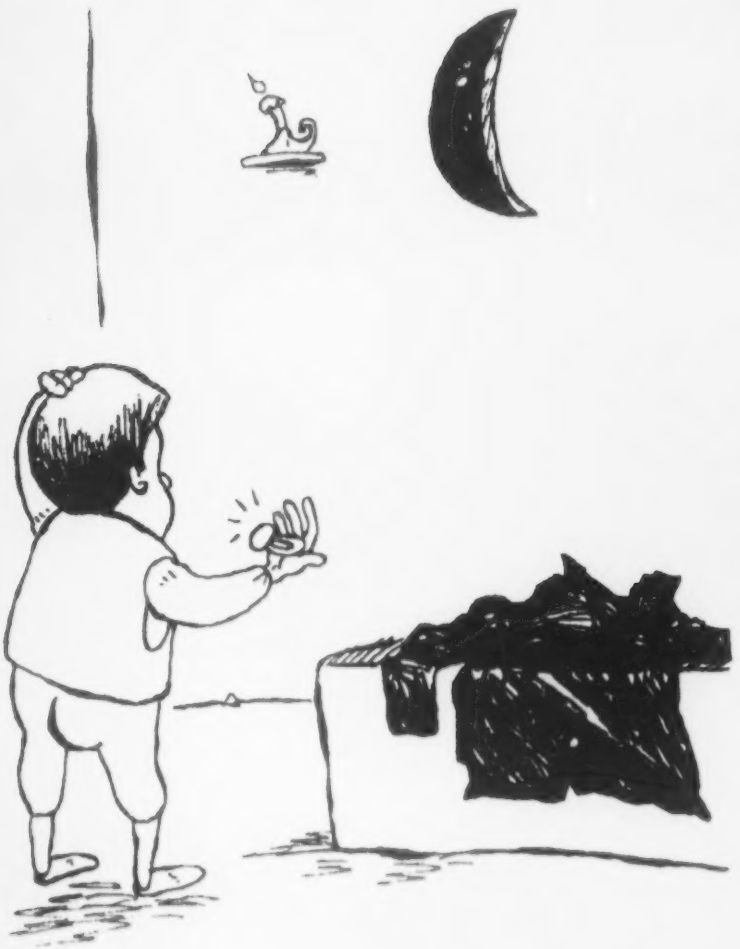
"No one who carries the ring can hide from them. They have captured the silver kestrel, a bird that hears the song of the stone wherever it is and can lead them to it. Were it buried in the deepest shaft, they would find it."

The man and the boy sat in silence, pondering this dilemma.

"My strength has left me," said the man at length. "But you are young. Carry this ring to Albion. He will certainly reward you."

Luc bent to stir the embers. What the man had not seen was that the boy was lame. He walked only slowly and with difficulty. How could he outdistance Mogor's henchmen on their strong horses?

When Luc turned back to tell him this, the man had vanished, leaving only his black cloak on the chair and the cold ring in Luc's hand.



The next morning, Luc rose early, before the innkeeper was afoot. Within his palm lay the ring, its stone changing from azure to amber to coral. He crept into the kitchen and drank a bowl of milk. He must decide what to do.

As he thought, Luc's eye lit upon a small, coarse sack half full of rock salt. An idea began to take shape in his mind. Perhaps there was a way. He took up the sack and dropped the ring inside, burying it in the salt. Then he went to the ale room and gathered up a handful of the corks the innkeeper used to stop his bottles.

Luc filled the sack with corks and drew the strings tight. Then he wrapped himself in the stranger's black cloak and slipped out the kitchen door.

The pale, gold light of morning streamed through the mist. Slowly, Luc made his way to a lake not far from the crossing. It was a small lake, but so deep it had never been sounded. Some said it was an ancient quarry left by the Romans. Others said it was the threshold to the underworld.

Now Luc untied a small boat and rowed swiftly to the middle of the lake. He said a quick prayer that he might be right in his calculations. Then he threw the sack of salt into the deep, black water. In an instant it sank, leaving a string of bubbles and then nothing.

In the late afternoon, the cavaliers of Artois galloped into Clary Crossing. Their gold and scarlet liveries were streaked with dust and sweat and the hoofs of their foaming steeds struck sparks in the lengthening shadows.

Astride the leather wristlet of one rode the hooded silver kestrel. The bird gave forth an angry cry as the horses drew to a halt before the inn. The innkeeper came to the doorway and wrung his hands and whimpered.

"What guests did you have last night, man?" cried the leader. "Speak or taste my blade!"

"None, none, none!" gibbered the innkeeper. "Nary a one, one, one!"

"A man in black has passed this way," challenged the leader. "The kestrel does not lie!" And the bird rose up on its talons with a screech."

Come in, then. Search! Look anywhere you wish. Ask my boy, my only servant. He will tell you. No one stopped last night."

But the cavaliers had no use for a mere boy. Instead, they turned to the mob of villagers that had gathered.

"The king is dead! Mogor shall rule, and his enemies shall perish! A gold sovereign to any of you who can take us to a tall man in a black cape."

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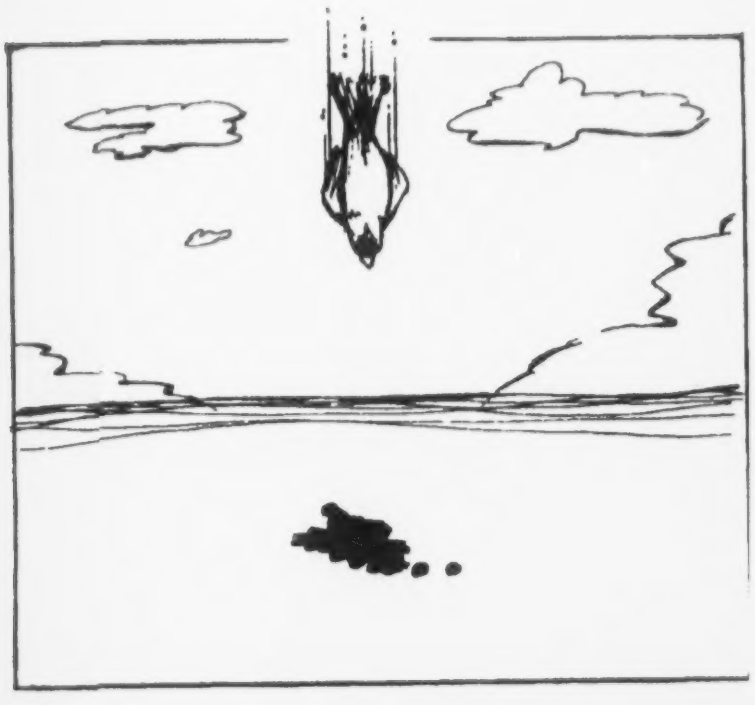
A peasant stepped forth. "At dawn this morning, your lordship, I saw a man in black go down to the lake. I cannot say I saw him return."

With a shout, the duke's men hastened to the water's edge.

"Release the bird!" ordered the leader, and the keeper slipped the black hood from the kestrel's head. For a moment, its fierce eyes shone like diamonds. Then with a rush of wings, the bird left its perch and began to soar.



The people watched it climb higher and ever higher over the dark lake. At last, when it had become a mere speck against the sky, the bird folded its wings and with a great, distant, keening shriek fell from the blue like a thunderbolt. Down, down it sped toward the deep black center of the lake, and there it sliced the water like a knife and broke its neck and drowned.

A cry of consternation went up from the crowd, for they saw the cavaliers of Artois turn their steed back toward Arras and they knew that war was inevitable. Late into the night, candles smoked in the cottages of the Crossing as the people gathered their treasures and prepared to hide all that they possessed in hillside caves, away from the plundering soldiers of Mogor.

The inn was the busiest spot of all. There the villagers gathered to await the word of war.

"Where is my salt?" shouted the innkeeper to his boy as he stirred the steaming stewpot. But Luc kept his counsel, saying nothing, and merely threw another garlic in the pot to raise the flavor. Late that evening, Luc rowed to the center of the deep lake and searched the moonlit surface. But he found nothing.

"Where are my corks?" roared the innkeeper the next night. Again, Luc kept his counsel and rolled leaves to plug the ale bottles. Again, he rowed out onto the lake in the moonlight. And again, he found nothing. His heart began to sink. Had he been wrong? Was the ring gone forever? Would there be war?

"Where is my scullery boy?" thundered the innkeeper on the third night. "Luc! Luc! Luc?"

But there was no answer. For that evening, Luc had rowed to the center of the lake. He had found a dark shape bobbing on the water and had fished it out in silent triumph and pulled open the drawstrings. Among the corks, a tiny moon shining in its onyx stone, lay the ring. The heavy rock salt had all dissolved, and the corks had brought the sack back to the surface.

Some days later, a young lad with a crutch and an oversized black cloak stood outside the palace at Amiens and demanded to see Prince Albion. Everyone laughed, but he insisted. When he was finally admitted, he gave the prince the ring and told him all that had happened. The prince embraced him and led him to his own table. He gave him roast quail, spiced oranges, and sweet puddings to eat, and a bath and a soft feather bed for his rest.

In reward for his cleverness and courage, Luc lived ever after in King Albion's household. There he studied and learned much. And it was soon forgotten that the famous Luc of Amiens, scientist, statesman, and scholar, was once the scullery boy at the inn at Clary Crossing.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

The magic stone made sounds that people and animals could hear. Luc found a clever way to hide the stone. But he could not keep the kestrel from hearing it, even when it was at the bottom of a lake. Imagine that Luc and the stone were around today. Talk about ways that Luc could have kept the kestrel from hearing the song of the stone. Be creative. Think about how you could use modern technology and materials.

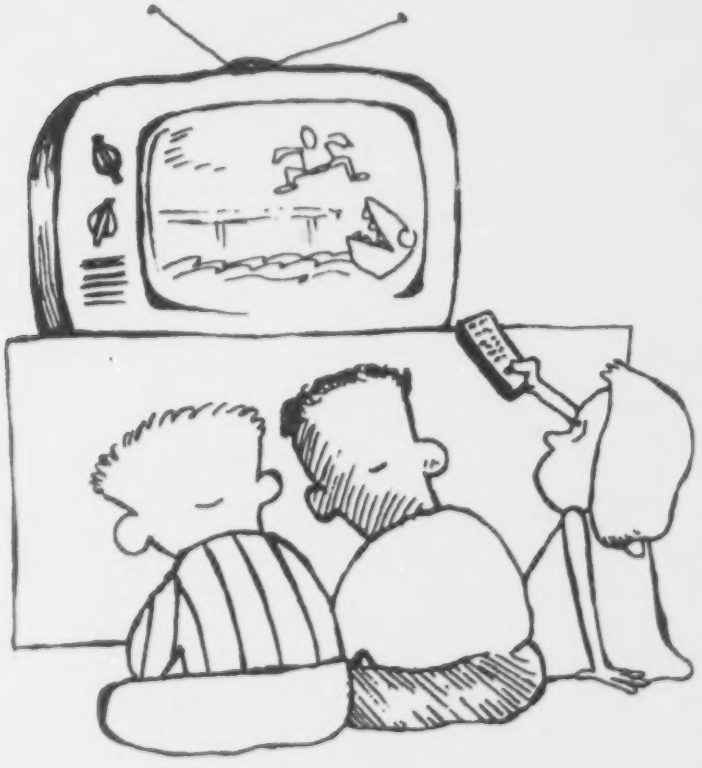
We hope you have had fun with these stories!

Homework is Home Learning

Homework is back in style. It used to be standard procedure for children to have daily homework assignments; then, as educational winds shifted,

homework lost favor. Now we parents realize that we need practice and learning at home to develop abilities that enrich our children's lives. Some subjects, such as reading and math, require lots of extra practice, and the home is the best place for it.

So what does this mean for parents? Helping children to work on their own at home isn't easy. TV, games, and neighbors pull children in directions that look much more inviting than does studying at home. On their own, children do not usually see the long-term value of practicing math and communication skills. Why should they read history or try to figure out why electricity runs the motors in their homes? Nintendo games and hanging out around the TV set are much more fun. So parents have to



help their children look into the future to see the value of homework and home learning.

As is the case with so many attitudes, children take their first cues from their parents. If parents see homework as worthwhile, then it's likely their children will value it also. If parents see that home study and home practice lead to competent performance in reading or science, then children will take on that same vision. And if parents believe that their children must accept responsibility for their own success as learners, then children will gradually accept responsibility for their own progress.

Specific things that parents can do to help with home study include the following:

1) Listen, read, and talk with your children about school work. Just showing interest will improve their grades.

2) Provide structure to make home study easier to perform. For example, you can do the following:

- Work with your children to set aside a specific time each day for homework.

- Answer your children's questions and ask them about the material they are studying, but do not do their homework for them.
- Encourage your children to bring home class notes so they become part of preparation for home learning.

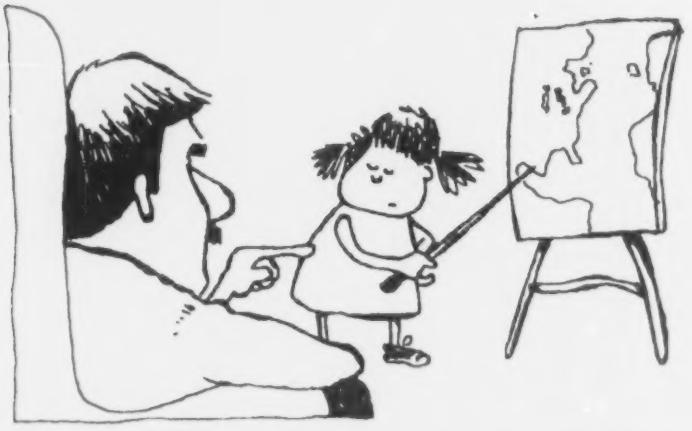
- Expect homework every night, even though your children may have an occasional free night. Reading an interesting book is a good substitute for assigned homework.
- Encourage your children to write notes and ideas as a way of promoting critical thinking.

For more on notetaking, see the comments in the question-and-answer section of this book.

3) Allow flexibility in time and place for home study, but encourage your child not to cancel it, or give it such a low priority that it becomes meaningless. If your child has an important game to play or some other school-related activity during normal study hours, allow her to shift homework times in order to participate in these other valuable activities. Homework can be done before or after the activity—preferably before.

4) When your child completes his homework, ask him to talk about what he has done or what he has learned. A brief overview helps you keep abreast of the things your child learns in school and alerts you to problems he may be having. If you ask for this information each evening at a specified time, it is easier for you to keep track of your child, and it also puts a time cap on the homework period. Your child will probably appreciate that.

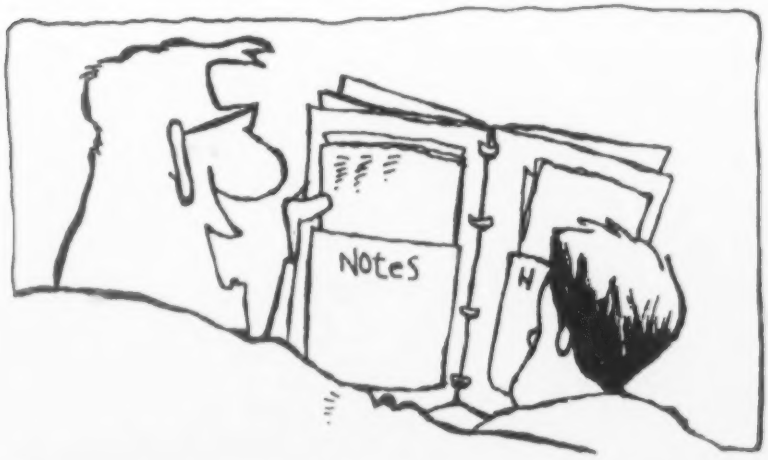
5) When your child is studying for a test, discourage "cramming" the night before the test. Ask your child to bring a textbook home at least every other night the week before the test. She can teach you what she has learned in school. Reverse roles—you be the learner. Your



child will learn by teaching you. These discussions could be held at the dinner table. But remember, they should be pleasant discussions. They are ways for you to keep track of where your child is in a chapter or in a learning unit. Perhaps you can use the questions at the end of the unit to direct these

regular reviews. For example, your child might use them to quiz you, and then you could review the answers together. It is also helpful for your child to make up her own study questions about important ideas in a chapter. She could take them to the teacher. Who knows? The teacher might use these questions on a test.

6) Writing is an important way to learn. Help your child realize this by showing him how to organize a notebook with a place for personal notes, a place for teacher handouts, and a place for assignments and tests. Such a notebook keeps all



important study information in one handy place. When a chapter or unit of study is completed, encourage your child to write a two- or three-sentence summary. A brief summary will help give him a sense of closure by including the topic and answers to what, how, and why. For example, a chapter on the environment might be summarized with these two sentences: "The air we breathe will stay clean only if we all do our part. We need to use less gasoline and plant more

trees in our cities to help nature recycle the air." As you can see, a summary acts only as a quick reminder of the chapter's content. The memory will then recall some of the important details.

If you remember to have homework become a regular part of your family's schedule and keep your discussions about homework as relaxed as possible, you can make major strides in using daily home learning in a beneficial way. You will soon see that by helping your child apply school learning to the world around her, you will make learning interesting and real. So do all you can: use maps in order to point out things and places mentioned on television; use the stove and refrigerator at home to demonstrate science principles. Finally, regularly use reference books as sources of information. Your attention to a few of these simple things will make homework the productive activity that it is meant to be.

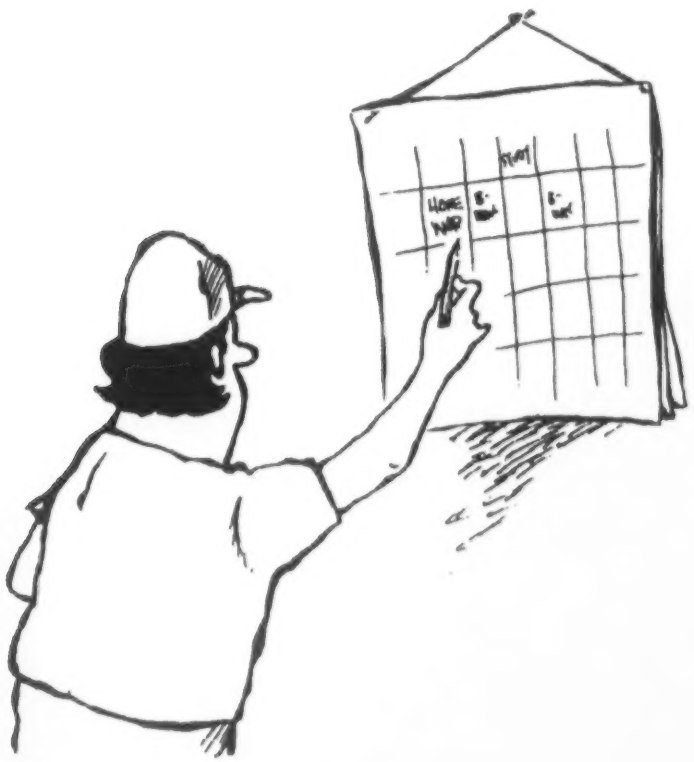
Questions about Homework and School

All parents have questions and need answers about their children. Here are some questions that other parents have asked concerning homework.

The older my son gets, the more disorganized he seems to be! How can I help him learn to organize his schoolwork?

As children move into the higher grades, teachers expect them to assume more responsibilities for their own learning. This means that children need to develop a system for organizing their studying—and their time—so they can be successful. As a parent, you can help your older child learn how to organize schoolwork.

"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail," says the old adage. It's true. At the beginning of the school year, help your son plan how to handle schoolwork and other activities he is involved with outside of school. Make a point to ask, "When do you want to schedule your homework time?" Then have your child write down a schedule. You might share with your son how you get yourself organized. Do you make lists? Do you use a calendar? The same system may appeal to your child.



Once your child has a plan, help him learn how to carry it out. Although homework is your child's responsibility, you can show your support in many ways, such as the following:

- Respect your child's study time. That means no radio, no TV, no phone calls, no interruption from friends coming to play.

- Work on your own projects near your son. You can pay bills, write letters, or read a book. You can create a sense that "we're all in this together."
- Help your child lay out a plan for accomplishing longer projects. Write out a schedule for accomplishing a big task. Breaking a big job down into small tasks not only helps him experience success, but avoids the frustration and stress that come with trying to do too much in too little time.

It is difficult for my children to come home after school and begin their homework. What can I do to help them complete their assignments within a reasonable time?

After a long day of school, some kids just can't sit still long enough to finish their homework. For your children, "divide and conquer" might be good advice.

First, set a schedule that allows for plenty of breaks. For instance, work for 15 or 20 minutes, and then take a 5-minute break.

Second, help your children break down their homework into manageable pieces. For example, in one session your child might work 15 math problems. In the next, she might look up 10 vocabulary words.

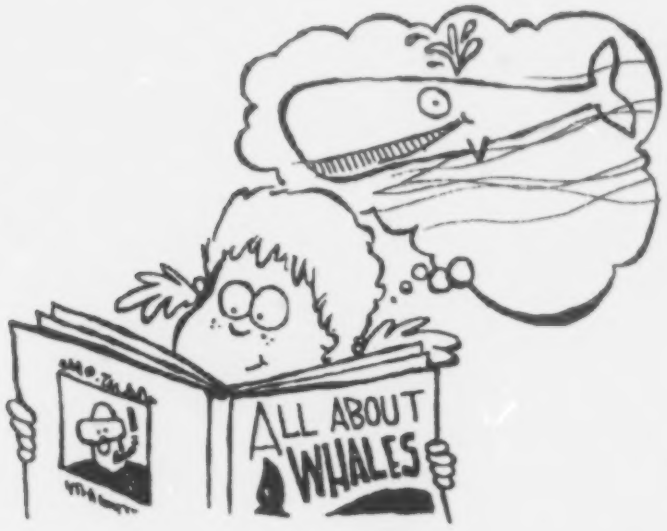
Third, give your children some free time. You might promise to play a favorite game or read a special story or do something together once homework is finished.

Fourth, allow for plenty of individual flexibility within the limits you set. Perhaps your family has the rule that homework must be done before dinner. One child prefers to do homework right after school. The other spends an hour outside before studying. Letting your children choose when they do homework places the responsibility on them for getting it done within your limits. This type of arrangement gives everyone some say in how homework is completed.

My child's teacher frequently uses the phrase "learning styles" when she offers suggestions to parents about helping their child with schoolwork at home. What does she mean by this?

As a parent, you know many things that make your child unique. Whether it's a talent for music or a great sense of humor, all children have something that makes them special. Kids also learn in different ways. A person's learning style is the way in which that individual learns best. For most children, one of these three learning styles will be strongest:

1. Visual learners learn mainly through seeing things. They learn best when they can see a picture in their minds. If they see something, such as printed directions, pictures, lists, or maps, they can understand it better. They comprehend better when they read what is in a book rather than hearing someone read it to them.



2. Auditory learners learn mainly through hearing. They learn best by listening and responding verbally. They can tell you the answer even though they have only been listening.

3. Kinesthetic learners learn through their bodies. They learn best by handling, touching, and manipulating things. They are more movement-oriented and when they have to sit still, their bodies seem to "go to sleep." One way to involve them is to have them write their thoughts down.

All children use all methods of learning. And no single style of learning is appropriate for all children. As a parent, you can help your children develop a homework style that seems best suited to the way each child learns.

For instance, here are some homework methods you can suggest to help a visual learner:

- ✓ Write lists of spelling words and post them.
- ✓ Put up a map of the United States with state capitals highlighted.
- ✓ Make a time line of important dates.
- ✓ Create flash cards to study vocabulary words or to learn math facts.

The following methods will help an auditory learner:

- ✓ Make up poems, rhymes, or other memory cues. Repeat them aloud.
- ✓ Repeat spelling words aloud.
- ✓ Read important lessons aloud.

- ✓ Tape record important reading assignments, facts, information, and vocabulary and spelling lists so that your child can listen to them on tape.

Kinesthetic learners can use these homework tips:

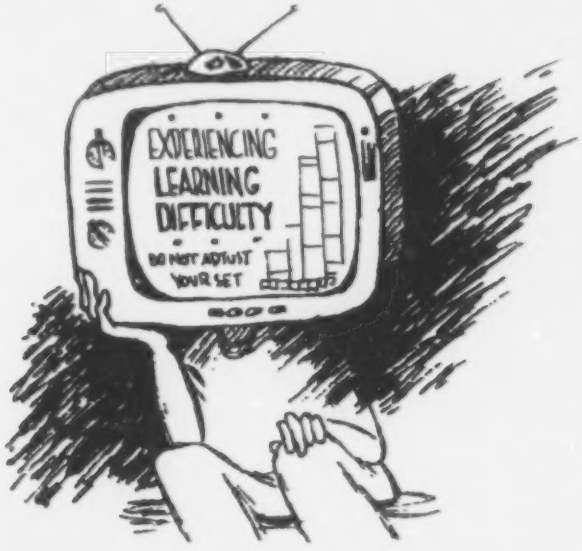
- ✓ Move around while studying. Read aloud while standing up.

- ✓ Act out an important lesson from history or perform creative dramatics from a story.
- ✓ Use a finger to focus the eyes while reading a textbook.
- ✓ Write and draw diagrams or illustrations from those things worth remembering.

We help our son every evening with school work in some way—reading aloud, math facts, spelling words, and other school-related assignments. He still struggles in school, and his papers and tests show very little improvement. Could he have a learning disability? What can we do?

What's it like to have a learning difficulty? The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests imagining "a distorted television picture caused by technical problems at the station. There is nothing wrong with the TV camera at the station or the TV set in your home. Something in the internal workings of the TV station prevents it from presenting a good picture."

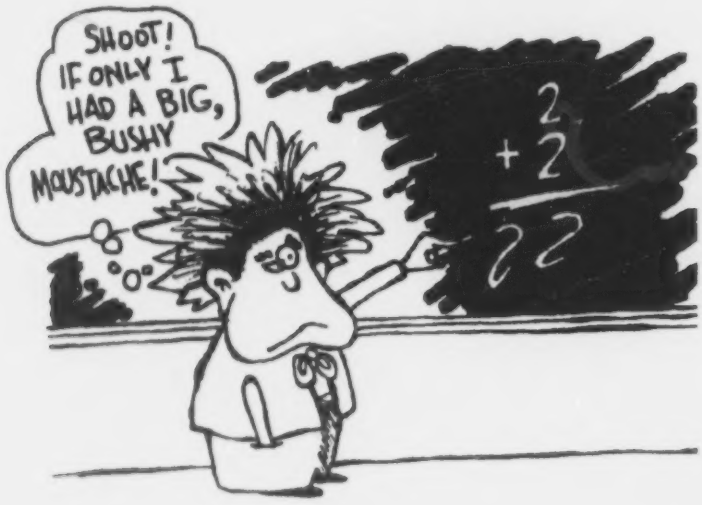
Children with learning difficulties usually can see and hear just fine. The American Academy of



Pediatrics says "the problem occurs in the brain after the eyes and ears have done their job."

Some famous and successful people have learning disabilities. For example, Olympic Gold Medal

winners Greg Louganis and Bruce Jenner have reading disorders. Einstein had difficulties with arithmetic as a child. There is no sure cure for a



learning difficulty. But there are ways to help children cope with these problems.

First, don't automatically suspect that your child has a brain disorder just because he has difficulty with a school subject. He may merely lack the background or the training to handle it.

Second, most schools have specialized testing facilities available to them. Talk to your son's teacher to see if the teacher thinks special testing is needed.

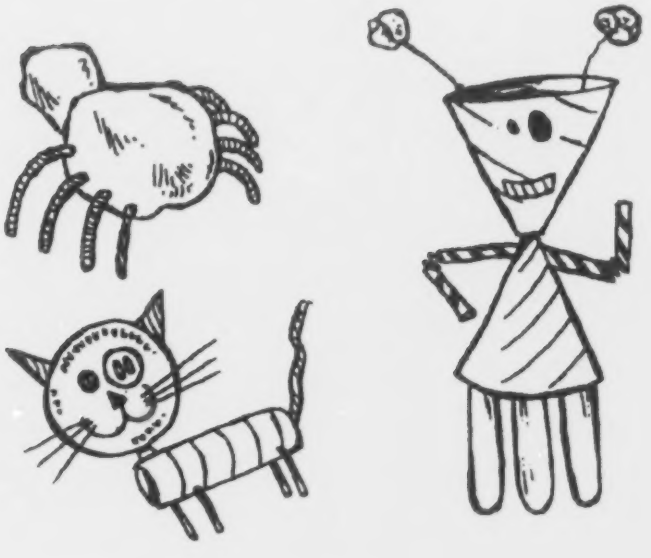
Third, discuss the problem with your doctor or pediatrician. She may have a recommendation for you.

Fourth, many communities have learning clinics that will test children and provide a diagnosis and a plan for you. Use these various resources to help you.

Activities for Fun and Learning

As parents, we are looking for activities that will benefit our children. Here are some activities for fun and learning that you can enjoy with your children.

- Help your child make different sizes of cylinders and cones using various colors of construction paper. Go for a walk and collect several rocks of assorted sizes and shapes. Decorate with paper, markers, tempera paint, beads, buttons, and fabric to make all kinds of animals, creatures, and objects. Then it may be fun to do some sorting—by color, shape, or size.



❋ Together, think about what the world will be like in the future. Will we live on another planet? Do you think our lives will be dominated by computers? Decide on a time in the future, twenty or fifty years from now. Help your child write down some of her thoughts and predictions about the future world. Keep what she writes in a safe place, and when she grows older she can read her forecasts to see if any of them came true.

* Choose either the first or last letter of your name. Make up sentences in which each word starts with that letter.

Claire can cut cantaloupe.

Bob buys big, blue, bus bumpers.

Mandy makes marvelous, mushy marshmallows.

If you repeat your sentence quickly, you will make your own tongue-twister.

These activities are from *My Own Fun*, by Carolyn Buhai Haas and Anita Cross Friedman. This sourcebook is full of activities for parents to do with their children, ages seven through twelve.

Books for Parents and Children

On the following pages, we have put together lists of books for parents and children. Some of the books give examples of good study habits and strategies for doing homework. We encourage you to take the time to read a few of these books with your child.

Books for Parents

Homework without Tears by Lee Canter and Lee Hausner. Presents a program to provide parents with an organized approach to helping their children with homework. Helps develop the skills to create a positive and stress-free learning environment in the home.

How to Help Your Child with Homework by Marguerite C. Radencich and Jeanne Shay Schumm. Includes charts, resources, games, and study tools to help parents assist their children with homework. Topics include reading, spelling, writing, math, science, social studies, reports, and tests.

The Survival Guide for Kids with LD: Learning Differences by Gary Fisher and Rhoda Cummings. A handbook that discusses different types of disorders, and programs at school. Suggests ways to help children deal with learning disabilities, make friends, and cope with negative feelings. Includes a list of resources and organizations for kids.

Books to Read Together

Ages 4-6

All About Where by Tana Hoban. Each page has a photograph and a list of descriptive words. Children may select specific words that apply to different objects in the picture.

What Neat Feet! by Hana Machotka. Gives the reader a chance to see a close-up picture of an animal's foot and guess what kind of animal it is. Then the correct answer is given. Also includes information on how each particular animal's feet help the animal live in its own environment.

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Meet the Alphabuddies by Jill Weaver. Each letter of the alphabet introduces, in rhymed text and illustration, a child whose name begins with that letter. Also presents problems to resolve.

Ages 6-8

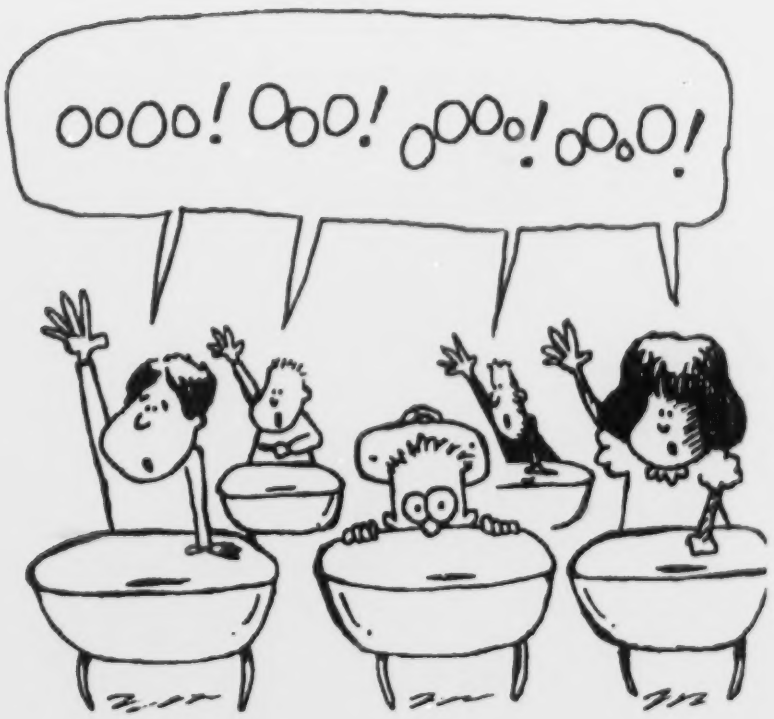
Help Is on the Way for: Study Habits by Marilyn Berry. Defines studying and explains why it is important. Identifies three practical steps to help organize study-time, space, and action plans.

Study Smarts: How to Learn More in Less Time by Judi Kesselman-Turkel and Franklynn Peterson. Proposes ways to streamline studying. Covers setting goals, taking notes, and decreasing review and reading time. Provides tips for special problems.

The Sierra Club Wayfinding Book by Vicki McVey. Describes how humans have developed systems using their senses, landmarks, maps, navigation, and signs in the natural world to find their way around. Includes activities, games, and experiments illustrating the principles of wayfinding.

Ages 8-10

You Can Speak Up in Class by Sara Gilbert. Addresses feelings of discomfort and anxiety students have when speaking in the classroom. Presents reasons for these problems and gives practical ways to deal with them.



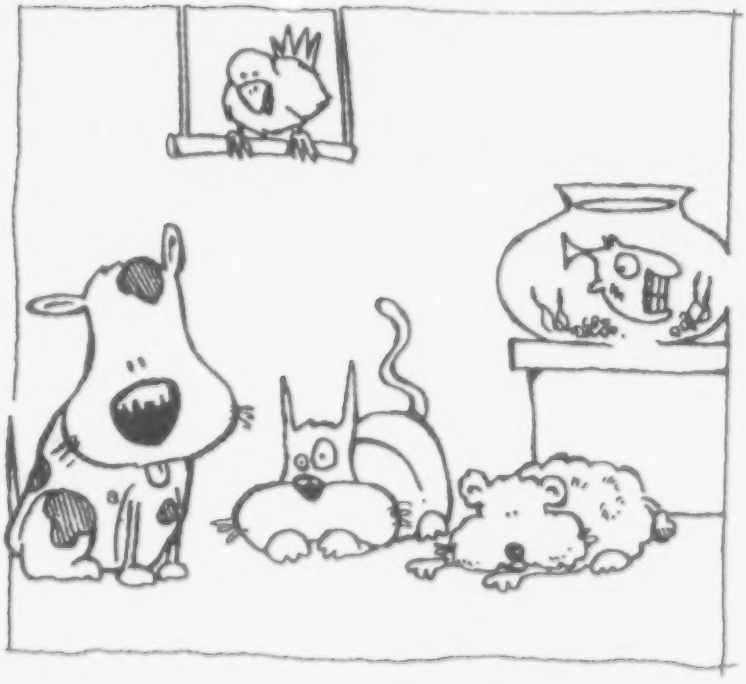
Tracking the Facts: How to Develop Research Skills by Claire McInerney. Covers selecting a topic, using the library, interviewing, and computer searching. Also provides information on taking notes, organizing an outline, and writing up the research results.

Chemically Active! Experiments You Can Do at Home by Vicki Cobb. Learn the principles of chemistry by trying some of these experiments. Most of the materials can be found in the home. Includes some magic tricks and detective adventures.

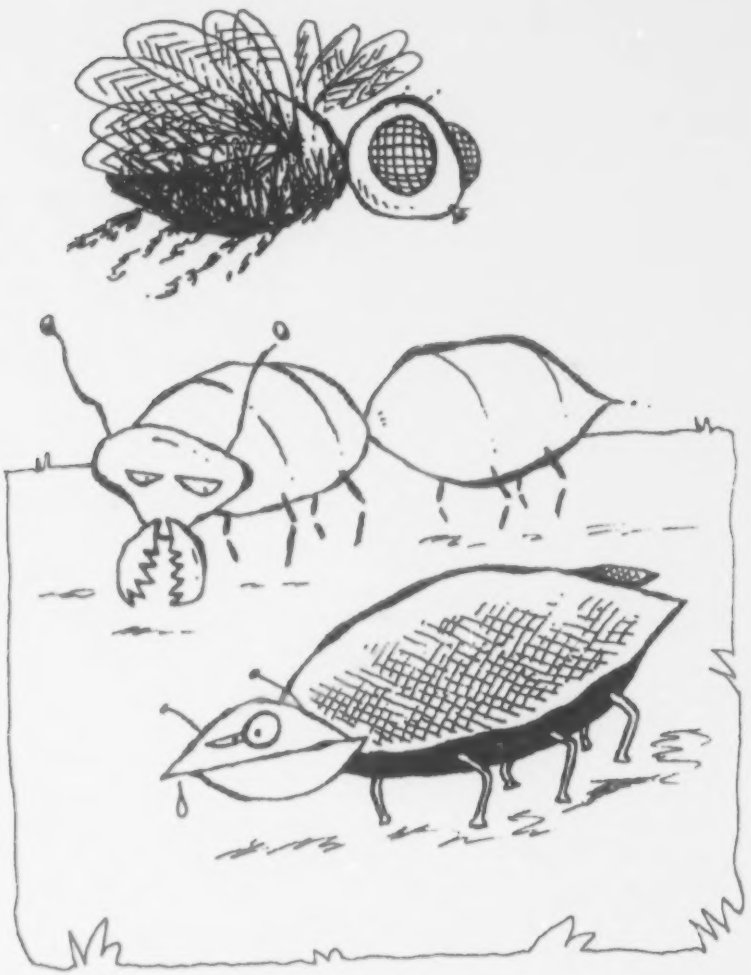
Books for Your Children to Read by Themselves

Ages 4-6

Pet Animals by Lucy Cousins. Shows animals children might have for pets. Also gives the word for each animal. This is a board book that makes page turning easy for little hands.



Ten, Nine, Eight by Molly Bang. Presents some of the different objects found in a child's bedroom while she is getting ready to go to bed. Numbers items from ten to one.



The Icky Bug Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta. Displays "icky bugs" for each letter of the alphabet. Large, precise illustrations and descriptions accompany each creature.

Ages 6-8

What to Do When Your Mom or Dad Says..."Do Your Homework! (and Schoolwork)" by Joy Wilt Berry. Explains why children are given homework and the benefits of doing homework. Gives suggestions on how to do homework well and learn from it.

What to Do When Your Mom or Dad Says..."Get Good Grades!" by Joy Wilt Berry. Defines the purpose of tests and grades. Presents practical skills that will enable students to get the most out of tests and grades.

Blinkers and Buzzers by Bernie Zubrowski. Includes experiments and projects that deal with electricity and magnetism. Most of the materials needed for the projects are found in the home.

Ages 8-10

Stories to Solve by George Shannon. A collection of brief folktales in which there is a mystery or a problem to solve. The puzzles can be solved by using common sense or careful observation.

How to Be School Smart by Elizabeth James and Carol Barkin. Examines different learning styles. Suggests ways to get organized. Includes chapters on homework and tests.

How to Write a Great School Report by Elizabeth James and Carol Barkin. Guides the student through the different steps of writing a report. Outlines choosing a topic, finding information, taking notes, preparing to write, writing, editing, and proofreading.

Magazines

Also ask the librarian for the following magazines for children:

Creative Kids

Cricket

Children's Playmate

Dolphin Log

Go! Girls Only!

Highlights for Children

Hot Dog

Kid City

Peanut Butter

Sports Illustrated for Kids

Turtle Magazine for Preschool Kids

*U*S* Kids*

Editor: Michael Shermis
Editorial Assistant: Melinda McClain
Writers: Carl B. Smith, Marge Simic, Melinda McClain, and Richard Stewart
Editorial Staff: Eleanor Macfarlane and Richard Stewart
Original Production: Lauren Bongiani
Cartoonist: Dave Coverly
Story Selection Committee: Kathy Burdick, Kim Faurot, and Hester Hemmling.

Audio Producer: Michael Shermis
Studio Engineer: Rick Wudell
Voices in Order of Appearance:

Side A: Elizabeth Spaulding and Carl B. Smith
Side B: Instructions by Elizabeth Spaulding

"Boy with a Shovel"

Narrator:	Rich Fish

"Rebel Cows: A Victim's Story"

Narrator:	Nathan Michaels

"The Innkeeper's Boy"

Narrator:	Rich Fish
Stranger:	Rich Fish
Luc:	Nathan Michaels
Leader:	Rich Fish
Innkeeper:	Glenn Simonelli
Peasant:	Glenn Simonelli

Studio: Music House, 1101 N. Hartstrait Rd., Bloomington, IN 47401

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"The Innkeeper's Boy" first appeared in *Cricket* v 16 n3, and is used by permission of the author, Diane Brooks Pleninger.

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